

Orselli, Apuzzo, and Lalla sounds as if it could be an Italian legal firm but in reality it's a trio that deals in a potent strand of post-Coltrane/Coleman jazz. Their earlier recording for Splasc(h), *Plaything For Soul* (2/89, p.84) demonstrated a penchant for lengthy, powerful passages of free blowing. On *Canti Di Ombre...* they're working with more compact and intricate forms. This tends to give the music a bit more focus but it sacrifices none of the immediacy of their previous release.

The trio is augmented (except on two tracks) by soprano saxist Gianni Gebbia and cellist Giovanni Macciocu. Rather than sounding like guests, they are fully integrated members of the ensemble. The compositions (written by the co-leaders) sound as if most were written with this quintet configuration in mind. The dirge-like "Curva Dominante" is as much a feature for Macciocu's cello as it is for Apuzzo's tenor. Although the compositions are more complex/arranged, they flow naturally. "Fragole E More" starts out with an arabesque figure (courtesy of Gebbia) before metamorphosing into a swirling folk dance. Before it's over it also takes in a bit of tango and a free section. It's pulled off with panache and a distinct lack of contrivance. The whole album comes off this way. "Granta" sports a loping head before it dissembles into a four-way dialogue that pits the two saxes against the two strings (playing arco) while Orselli accompanies with a fractured, funky beat. "Think Free"'s melody has the feel of an Italian folk song that's played in a rubato, Ayleyresque style.

All the players are exceptional. Particularly notable is Orselli's all-encompassing percussion work. He uses an extended kit and his work is punctuated with the element of surprise. Check out his subtle fills on the pointillistic intro to "Tutto E Un Modo..." This is one of the most exciting of the recent releases I've heard from Italy. The one negative is the recorded sound which renders some of Apuzzo's more explosive moments a bit too strident and Orselli's cymbal splashes a bit too oversaturated. But despite that, it's well worth seeking out. **D**